



Oedo Sukeroku Daiko FAQ

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Many thanks to Kobayashi sensei of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko for spending a generous amount of time talking with me, and also to Ochi-san of the Taiko Kan museum who clarified many points. Takemasa Ishikura has answered many questions. Ryuma Tanaka has provided copies of the letters from Kobayashi sensei. Takeshi Sumida looked up the stand patents and provided images.

This FAQ addresses several issues of international copyright and patent law, and is provided as a service to the readers of the Taiko Resource. Rolling Thunder is not offering any kind of legal advice hereby. Please consult a lawyer if you have questions on how the legal issues affect you.

1. Historical Context

Around 1959, a group called Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Daiko was founded under the auspices of the Yushima Tenjin shrine. The roots of the Sukeroku Style apparently was created during this time. The group included Yoshihisa Ishikura, Yutaka Ishizuka (who received the stage name Saburo Mochizuki), Seido Kobayashi, and Motoei Onozato (who received the stage name Kiyonari Tosha). At some point, the group broke up, and a junior member named Imaizumi Yutaka created the Sukeroku Daiko Honzonkai to continue the tradition. When Kobayashi Seido decided to revive the group, he found Imaizumi sensei has taken the Sukeroku name, so he created Oedo Sukeroku Daiko with Ishikura, Ishizuka and Onozato as founding members. It seems these four members were responsible for creating many of the hallmark Sukeroku pieces such as Yodan and Midare-uchi.

At some point, the other founders besides Kobayashi left the group. Seido Kobayashi maintained Oedo Sukeroku Daiko. Ishikura sensei founded Kanto Abare Daiko. Tosha sensei and Mochizuki sensei continued on as Japanese classical music performers. (Tosha-sensei has recently co-founded the Nihon Taiko Dojo).

Since all four had a hand in forming the original Sukeroku daiko, as well as in composing the core material, all four founders, as well as Imaizumi sensei, play their own arrangements of those pieces. Kobayashi sensei, of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, is the most active of all the founders in performing the Sukeroku style. He has since given himself the title of *iemoto*, or hereditary head of the Sukeroku Daiko style. This title is traditional and has no legal bearing as far as I know. It also has no effect on the other three founders of the original Sukeroku Daiko.

Regardless of its origins, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko has polished and refined their style over the last forty years and it is very unique and quite distinctive now.

2. Impact on North American Taiko

Taiko in North America owes a large, and often unrecognized debt to Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, and by extension to the original Sukeroku Daiko. The first professional taiko group in Japan, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko created a dynamic style that blended hogaku (classical music), budo (martial arts) and buyo (dance). The group has gone on to be successful (having just performed their fortieth anniversary concert) and influential, both in Japan and abroad.

Seiichi Tanaka brought the Oedo Sukeroku style to America after having studied and performed with the group. Tanaka sensei, having express permission to play and teach Oedo Sukeroku repertoire, has gone on to become Oedo Sukeroku Daiko's official representative in North America.

Many of Tanaka sensei's students have gone on to form other groups in North America, and the Oedo Sukeroku style has gone with them. It would not be a far reach to say that most groups in North America owes a stylistic debt to Oedo Sukeroku. In fact, many groups play Oedo Sukeroku's repertoire, often improperly, without permission, and without realizing where the material originated from.

Many songs that are commonly played by taiko groups in North America are actually Sukeroku compositions or arrangements. While many may suppose songs like Yodan Uchi, Matsuri Daiko and Midare Uchi are traditional and in the public domain, actually they were composed and copyrighted by Kobayashi sensei (with others as noted above) of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko. Please note that Matsuri Daiko is an extremely common title, and there are many unrelated songs by that name in Japan.

3. Letters from Oedo Sukeroku Daiko

At the 1999 Taiko Conference in Los Angeles (July 30 - Aug 21), Seiichi Tanaka, director of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo and Oedo Sukeroku Daiko's representative in North America, presented a [letter from Oedo Sukeroku Daiko](#) to the taiko community. This letter was written in May, 1999, by Seido Kobayashi, artistic director of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko. The letter asks that groups which play Oedo Sukeroku Daiko's repertoire without permission stop doing so.

This was followed by a second letter from Kobayashi sensei which was faxed to San Francisco Taiko Dojo on July 29, 1999. The letter was then translated by Keiko Ito and made available to the Taiko Resource on August 17, 1999. This second letter contains guidelines for learning Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire, and for properly paying royalties. By the request of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko on March 1, 2000, this letter has been removed while it is being revised.

4. Copyright issues.

As a professional group, Oedo Sukeroku has spent considerable time and effort in composing material and continuing to elevate the quality of their performances. As such, they are disappointed with the tremendous amount of taiko groups in Japan and North America that improperly appropriated Oedo Sukeroku material. In Oedo Sukeroku's view, not only is it depriving Oedo Sukeroku of revenue that is properly and legally theirs, it deprives the taiko community of the original material that each taiko group should be creating for themselves. As such, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko demands that each group performing the Dageikyoku (Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire) without express permission from the

group cease doing so.

A partial list of the Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire includes: Shun Rai; Shiraume Daiko; Sukeroku Matsuri Daiko; Sukeroku Mai Daiko; Oiuchi Daiko; Sukeroku Yodan Uchi; Sukeroku Midare Uchi; Edo no Kaze; Oedo Sumida Gawa Hanabi Daiko; Shin Shiraume Daiko; Shin Sukeroku Matsuri Daiko; Sukeroku Mikoshi Daiko; Oedo Sukeroku; and Dashi.

Groups performing these works, or derivations, are very likely in violation of copyright law.

A quick reading of International Copyright Law seems to provide protection for a work of art equal to that of your home country, assuming your country is a signatory to the agreement, as are Japan and the US. What this means is even if your work is created in Japan, it is protected in America as if it were created in America - thus American laws apply.

There are still a number of unresolved issues about the Sukeroku Daiko copyrights, such as how the other founders feel about the issue, and how their rights are protected by the copyrights. However, as of Fall, 1999, all four founders began meeting to discuss issues of copyright and accreditation. Eventually, a consistent policy may emerge.

Learning the Dageikyoku

If a North American taiko group really desires to play the Dageikyoku (Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire), they are requested to contact Seiichi Tanaka of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo as North American representative of Oedo Sukeroku. Oedo Sukeroku Daiko has issued [guidelines](#) by which Oedo can be sure the Dageikyoku is being performed to their satisfaction, as well as insure that proper credit and revenue is given to the group.

Oedo Sukeroku Daiko expects the groups performing the Dageikyoku to show they can perform the material to Oedo's satisfaction - a process that usually takes several years before permission to perform Oedo's repertoire is granted. Each group is then responsible for informing Oedo Sukeroku each time they wish to perform Oedo material, and for paying a royalty for the right to use the material.

Oedo Sukeroku particularly wishes that players desiring to play Oedo material arrange through Tanaka sensei to study with the group in Japan. As Oedo's music is deeply rooted in Japanese musical tradition and culture, they would like players to live, eat and breath in Japan to properly learn and appreciate the basis of Oedo's music.

It should be noted that players who are serious about learning Oedo's material are expected to spend a significant amount of time doing so. In Japan, it generally takes three years to learn the control and timing required to play the pieces at a professional level and tempo, and thus three years before a student is allowed to perform.

However, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko is very interested in spreading the Oedo style, and regularly gives workshops to that effect. The basics of the classic Oedo Sukeroku movements and rhythms are taught to students worldwide. Oedo repertoire is not taught at these workshops, as Oedo hopes that each group will use these basics to create their own original material.

5. Stands and patents

Oedo Sukeroku Daiko has been granted two patents on stand designs. One is for the slant stand that is used by so many taiko groups in Japan and America. The other is for the unique Oedo Sukeroku odaiko stand. According to Oedo Sukeroku literature, both stands were invented by Seiko Kobayashi, the older brother of Seido Kobayashi (Oedo Sukeroku's leader). However, the patent lists the inventor as Seido Kobayashi.

What Oedo Sukeroku have been granted is a "design patent." Meaning they are not claiming that they invented the stand rather they are claiming that shape of the stand is "Sukeroku stand." In Japan, apparently a design patent has limited duration of 14 years after it is granted. So the validity of the patent will expire in 2003. What specific protections the "design patent" gives Oedo Sukeroku under Japanese law is unclear at this time.

Although the stands were likely invented in the early 1960's, the patents were applied for in 1987 by Seido Kobayashi, and were granted by the Japanese government in 1989. This raises some serious legal issues on makers who were producing this stand before the patent was granted: If a maker can show they were producing the stand before the patent was granted (under US law) those companies probably have the right to continue to make (and profit from) the Sukeroku design.

The patents are available for viewing in .gif format (16k).

- [Slant stand patent page one](#)
- [Slant stand patent page two](#)
- [Slant stand patent three](#)
- [Odaiko stand patent page one](#)
- [Odaiko stand patent page two](#)

Original copies can be obtained from the [Japanese patent office](#).

In America, a patent must be vigorously defended to be considered valid. This may make it difficult for Oedo Sukeroku Daiko to defend the patent, as most taiko makers in Japan already make the slant stands - possibly without paying any royalties. However this is an issue for the courts to decide. How Japanese law treats this topic is unknown.

6. Known authorized North American performers of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire

Authorization primarily is granted to individuals, rather than groups. If a performer is authorized to play Dageikyoku (Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire), they can teach it to the students in their own taiko group in order to perform the repertoire. However, those students, even though they have been taught Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire by an authorized performer, do not inherit the ability to play or teach Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire if they leave the authorized performers' taiko group. These student would have to get authorization for themselves to play the repertoire.

Also note that there are four founders of the original Sukeroku Daiko group, and some people have received permission to perform and teach original Sukeroku Daiko material without any contact from Oedo Sukeroku Daiko.

The following list is incomplete, and the Taiko Resource welcomes additions.

Known authorized performers of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko repertoire
Kenny Endo of the Taiko Center of the Pacific

Tiffany Tamaribuchi of the Sacramento Taiko Dan and Tozai Wadaiko
Seiichi Tanaka of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo (North American Representative)

Takemasa Ishikura of Maturiza is the younger brother of one of the founders.

7. Jozuke

Oedo Sukeroku Daiko would also like to clear up some confusion concerning the term "jozuke". This is a term that was created by Oedo Sukeroku Daiko and is used to describe a medium sized nagado-daiko on a slant stand. The term is literally means to "place facing up," and in Japan the term is not used outside of the Oedo Sukeroku Daiko group. North American taiko groups often mispronounce the term as "josuke".

8. Oedo Sukeroku Daiko Contact Info

Please note that Tanaka Sensei of San Francisco Taiko Dojo is the official North American representative of Oedo Sukeroku Daiko. Following Japanese style, all introductions and visits to the group should be arranged through Tanaka-sensei. Groups have been able to successfully contact Oedo Sukeroku directly, but usually are scolded for breach of protocol.

[Oedo Sukeroku Daiko](#)

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